



Part 2: The Immunization Office Visit

Before the Immunization Visit

If you have a vaccination record card for your baby, take it along so the provider can mark the shots given to her today. If she is getting her first vaccination(s), ask for a card. This record could come in handy later to show that your child has had the vaccinations necessary to get into school, or if you move or switch doctors.

Your baby's vaccines may also be entered into an electronic registry, or "immunization information system."

The doctor or nurse will ask you some questions about your baby. Some of these questions will be to make sure there are no reasons your baby should not get certain vaccines. Be prepared to answer:

- Has your baby had a severe reaction to a previous dose of any vaccine?

Babies often get a sore leg or a mild fever after vaccinations. But let your provider know if your baby has ever had a more serious side effect. There are a few uncommon reactions that could be a reason to not give another dose of a vaccine.

- Does your baby have any severe allergies?

A baby who has a severe allergy to a substance that is in a vaccine shouldn't get that vaccine. (By a severe allergy we mean one that could be life-threatening. Less severe allergies aren't a problem.)



Naturally you can't be expected to know whether or not your baby is allergic to every substance in every vaccine. All you can do is report any allergies you do know about. Your doctor or nurse will be able to cross-check these against lists of vaccine ingredients.

Don't be too worried about allergies you don't know about. Severe allergic reactions to vaccines are rare (around 1 in a million), and your provider is prepared to deal with them if they do occur.

Among allergies that you might know about are eggs, gelatin and yeast, which are in certain vaccines, and latex, which might be part of the syringe or in the stopper of a vaccine vial.

-Does your child have an immune system problem?

A child with a suppressed immune system should not get certain (live) vaccines. A suppressed immune system can be caused by diseases such as AIDS, leukemia, or cancer, or by medical treatments such as steroids, chemotherapy, or radiation.

Your doctor, nurse, or other provider will be able to help you answer any questions.

During the Immunization Visit

Your provider should give you a Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) for each vaccine your child receives. VISs contain useful information about the vaccine, including its risks and benefits. If you would like to review these VISs before the office visit, you can find them online at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/default.htm. There is a VIS for each vaccine, and many of them are also available in languages other than English.

Your provider will ask questions like those mentioned in the previous section, to determine if your baby has any contraindications or precautions to vaccination.

Always ask your provider if you have any questions or would like more information.

Your provider might ask you to hold your baby in a certain way to steady the arm or leg where the shot will be given. These techniques are designed to keep her still without actually holding her down or frightening her.

Many providers like to keep a child in the office for observation for about 15 or 20 minutes after getting vaccines, in the unlikely event of an allergic reaction or in case the child becomes dizzy or faints.

If your baby has a moderate or severe cold or other illness, you might be asked to postpone vaccinations until he gets better.

Be sure that any vaccinations that are given get recorded in your baby's shot record.

After the Immunization Visit

Sometimes a child will have a fever or a sore leg or arm (where the shot was given) after an immunization visit. You can give your child a non-aspirin pain reliever to reduce any pain or fever that might follow vaccinations. Giving the child plenty of fluids to drink can also help reduce a fever. A cool, wet washcloth over the sore area can help relieve pain.



If your baby cries for 3 or more hours without quitting, if he seems limp or unresponsive, if he starts having seizures (convulsions), or if you are worried at all about how your baby looks or feels, call your provider right away. Serious reactions are uncommon, but your provider will know how to deal with them if they occur.

Once again, a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine is very unlikely, but if one were to occur, be ready to respond to it:

- If an allergic reaction occurs, it will usually happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.
- Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, dizziness, swelling of the throat, hives, fast heartbeat, hoarseness or wheezing.
- If your baby shows these signs, **call a doctor and get him to a doctor right away.**
- Be ready to tell the doctor when the reaction occurred, what vaccinations were given, and when.



In the unlikely event that your child does have a serious reaction, first have it taken care of by your doctor or other provider. But afterward, there are two programs you should know about:

- **VAERS.** This stands for the **Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.** It is a system for reporting vaccine side effects. If your child has an unusual medical condition within a few days after getting a vaccine, even if you don't know whether it was caused by the vaccine, you should report it to VAERS. One of the jobs of VAERS is to collect these reports and use the data to help determine whether specific medical problems might be caused by vaccines.

Your provider will usually file a VAERS report for you. However, you can also file it yourself. For more information, see the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov.

- **Vaccine Injury Compensation Program.** If you believe your child was seriously injured by a vaccine, there is a no-fault federal program that can help compensate you for his care. To learn more about the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, see their website at www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation.

Most parents will never need these programs, but they are there if you do.